

**TESTIMONY OF  
KATHLEEN SILARD,  
PRESIDENT & CEO, STAMFORD HEALTH  
SUBMITTED TO THE  
PUBLIC HEALTH COMMITTEE  
Friday, March 6, 2020**

**HB 5020, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget  
Recommendations Regarding Public Health**

Good afternoon. Stamford Health appreciates the opportunity to provide testimony on ***HB 5020, An Act Implementing the Governor's Budget Recommendations Regarding Public Health***. Stamford Health supports the provisions of HB 5020 that ban the sale of flavored tobacco and vaping products and the provisions limiting the nicotine content of an electronic nicotine delivery system or vapor product to 35 milligrams per milliliter.

Stamford Health is a comprehensive, independent non-profit health care system that serves a region of approximately 650,000 people. We employ more than 3,600 people, making us the largest employer in the city of Stamford and one of the largest in Fairfield County. Beyond the lifesaving care we provide 24 hours a day, 365 days a year, we contribute more than \$1 billion to our state and local economy and provide more than \$80 million in uncompensated care to the residents that need it most. We are committed to providing friendly, personal care coupled with the most sophisticated services to all residents of lower Fairfield County.

We appreciate the 2019 restrictions the General Assembly placed on tobacco and vaping products for those under age 21. The proposed restrictions before you in HB 5020 are an important step in continuing to curb smoking and vaping.

Stamford Health's 2019 Community Health Needs Assessment, which surveyed residents in Stamford and Darien, indicated that residents were concerned about the growing number of adolescents experimenting with vaping including those who were starting as early as middle school. Both school administrators and nurses reported a need for health education to counter marketing by e-cigarette and tobacco industries.

Statistics back up residents' concerns. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention data show that while cigarette smoking has decreased among high school students, going down from 16% in 2011 to 8% in 2018, the use of e-cigarettes greatly increased, from less than 1% to over 18% in the same period.

To educate the public about the dangers of vaping, Stamford Health has sponsored a number of

public events at which physicians present information. In addition, it participates in a Stamford citywide vaping taskforce formed to further inform the public and address vaping.

As a reminder of how harmful vaping products can be, in 2019, an outbreak of lung injury associated with the use of vaping products led to the state Department of Public Health advising the public to stop using electronic cigarettes while the federal government investigated the illness. This highlights some of the need and reasons to ensure products are not appealing to children and youth.

We urge your support of the tobacco and vaping restrictions in HB 5020 and are available to answer any questions. Thank you for your consideration of our position.